

*RESTRICTIONS ON
COMMERCE.*

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against the introduction of senna, did not save the Continental system from destruction.¹ Ridicule attended the installation of the odious prevotal courts. The president of the Prevotal Court at Hamburg, who was a Frenchman, delivered an address, in which he endeavored to prove that in the time of the Ptolemies there had existed extraordinary fiscal tribunals, and that it was to those Egypt owed her prosperity. Terror was thus introduced by the most absurd folly. The ordinary customhouse officers, formerly so much abhorred in Hamburg, declared with reason that they would soon be regretted, and that the difference between them and the prevotal courts would soon be felt. Bonaparte's counsellors led him to commit the folly of requiring that a ship which had obtained a license should export merchandise equivalent to that of the colonial produce to be imported under the authority of the license. What was the consequence ? The speculators bought at a low price old stores of silks, which change of fashion had made completely unsalable, and as those articles were prohibited in England they were thrown into the sea without their loss being felt. The profits of the speculation made ample amends for the sacrifice. The Continental system was worthy only of the ages of ignorance and barbarism, and had it been admissible in theory, was impracticable in application. It cannot be sufficiently stigmatized. They were not the friends of the Emperor who recommended a system calculated to rouse the indignation of Europe, and which could not fail to create re-action. To tyrannize over the human species, and to exact uniform admiration and submission, is to require an impossibility. It would seem that fate, which had still some splendid triumphs in store for Bonaparte, intended to prepare beforehand the causes which were to deprive him of all his triumphs at once, and plunge him into reverses even greater than the good fortune which had favored his elevation.

The prohibition of trade, the habitual severity in the execution of this odious system, made it operate like a

Continental

¹ Sydney Smith was struck with the ridiculous side of the war of tariffs: "We are told that the Continent is to be reconquered by the want of rhubarb and plums" (*Essays of Sydney Smith*, p. 533, edition of 1851).